Alqueria 2013

Alqueria started the new year leaderless, bankrupt and in a state of civil unrest. In true Alquerian tradition however, most of the population didn't even notice. Since the exclusion of Alqueria from Spain and subsequently declaring itself a republic the village had gone from strength to strength. The unique Remitroot crop was the secret of its success. The powerful and strangely arousing beverages produced from it sold worldwide at premium prices.

The Hill People controlled Remitroot with Antonio Poyato cultivating the optimum crop on his small-holding to the south west of the Village. The opposing Newcomers who inhabit the eastern barrio and led by the repulsive Rodriquez lost influence because of the success of Remitroot. With his second in command the sycophantic Robles and two obnoxious bully-boys they imprisoned Poyato, Blythe Gruntmore and took control of the village. The girl Manuela escaped and using the ancient weapons belonging to the even more ancient Matas, launched an attack on the village freeing Poyato and Gruntmore. Rodriquez who was resplendent in his meaningless and over-medalled uniform came face-to-face with the armed and wide-eyed Manuela. It was too much for him.

Fearing Manuela Rodriquez now hides in the shadows. He no longer wears his ridiculous uniform but instead favours the garb of a campesino. His obese frame and arrogant manner were however at odds with the dignity required for such a station in life. The effect made him more conspicuous and absurd than ever.

With no one at the helm Alqueria drifted into 2013. The village was fast losing prosperity. Rodriquez had renamed the world-beating Remitroot as Rodroot100 undoing centuries of goodwill in an instant. He knew what he had to do. First find a scapegoat to blame the whole mess on. This was usually Roberto Robles who was such a crawler he considered it an honour to carry the can for Rodriquez. Second he must make peace with Manuela and the Hill People. A meeting was proposed on the

neutral ground of the old golf course. Manuela however had never been on a golf course during the hours of daylight so didn't consider it particularly neutral.

Manuela, Antonio Poyato and Blythe Gruntmore who were to become known as The Alqueria Three, dismissed all calls for peace conferences and laid plans for the re-conquest of Alqueria. The majority of the population were not even aware of Rodriquez's coup d'état and would probably not notice the village's return to democracy.

Among the four in Matas's cave Manuela became known as La Maracuyá Pequeña, for reasons it is best not to dwell on. Her mastery over men and ingenuity put The Little Passion-fruit in a position of dominance and de facto leader of free Alqueria.